

Testimony of Jill Cirasella, Associate Professor
Before the Board of Trustees of the City University of New York
Concerning the University Budget Request for FY 2015-2016 as it
Relates to the PSC-CUNY Collective Bargaining Agreement
(Calendar Item 3.F.)

24 November, 2014

Good evening. My name is Jill Cirasella, and I'm an Associate Professor in the Library Department at the Graduate Center. I'm speaking in reference to the University Budget Request (Calendar Item 3. F.) and in support of a budget that funds annual leave parity for librarians.

As you know, librarians in CUNY are faculty. Faculty in library departments have the same requirements for tenure and promotion as all faculty. However, faculty in library departments work 35-hour weeks all year round, whereas other faculty work the academic calendar and also have winter and spring breaks.

Simply put: We receive far less leave time than other faculty members in the University. And the leave time we do get is not enough to fully develop, pursue, and expand our research agendas. In recognition of this inequity, the PSC has included annual leave parity for librarians in its list of contractual demands and is working towards securing that parity.

“Annual leave” is the term used by the University to designate that time when faculty are not engaged in their teaching and service commitments. It is the time when the bulk of the work done to meet tenure and promotion requirements takes place. In short, when we talk about “annual leave,” we are talking about research opportunities.

In their years on the tenure clock, faculty in non-library departments have about 738 days for research, including winter breaks. During those same years, library faculty are allotted

approximately half as much time. Again, all faculty are evaluated for tenure and promotion in the same processes, by the same voting bodies, and according to the same criteria.

As you can imagine, this structural inequality compounds over a career. After 20 years, library faculty have about 1000 days fewer than other faculty for engaging in scholarship. As a result, only 16% of current CUNY library faculty have reached the rank of Full Professor. For the University as a whole, 33% of faculty have reached Full Professor.

Library faculty scholarship not only increases the visibility and prestige of the University, it feeds back into our work with students. The University has affirmed the importance of the scholarship of librarians by recognizing our eligibility for sabbaticals and PSC-CUNY Awards. More recently, the University acknowledged the importance of library faculty scholarship by including us in the Junior Faculty Reassigned Time program.

However, Junior Faculty Reassigned Time without leave time parity more generally is not enough. Personally, I have a backlog of at least three articles that I haven't been able to start because of lack of leave time. Furthermore, I turned down a book offer from a well-known library science publisher because I did not have enough leave time to give it the attention it deserved, and I downsized another book idea into an article for the same reason.

In conclusion, library faculty must be guaranteed a fair opportunity to engage in the sustained scholarship we all value.